

The Community Hospital

132-134 WEST KINNEY ST.

NEWARK, N. J.

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OPERATED BY

Booker T. Washington Community Hospital Association, Inc.

OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT

THE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL REPORTS ON THE
INCIDENCE OF HEART DISEASE
AMONG ITS PATIENTS

From the Medical Department

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Chief of the Department

At the present time, Heart Disease is the No. 1 killer of mankind, and the opinion is growing in medical circles that it should be classed as a public health problem along with Tuberculosis, Syphilis, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Small Pox, Cholera, Typhoid, Malaria and the others, which we need not mention here.

A few months ago, while making rounds through the wards of Community Hospital, the Writer was struck by the number of Heart Cases in the Hospital at that time, as compared to the other types of diseases. To learn if it were a mere coincidence, or a true reflection of the general relationship of Heart Disease to the other types of sickness among our patients, we checked our admissions for the year 1940, and we found that out of 400 admissions, 126 showed disease of the Heart in some form. This means that 31.5% of the Negro patients admitted to Community Hospital were suffering of Heart Disease.

Whether or not this same proportion would hold good throughout the Negro population of Newark, we venture no guess. Whether or not our figures are higher than those of the other hospitals of the

community we do not know, but we do know that when 31.5% of admissions are cases of Heart Disease, the incidence becomes impressive and should not be treated casually, either by the community or the Profession.

We, at the Community Hospital, are desirous of doing more than treat the unfortunate sick which come to us. We would like to be a dependable source for the spreading of health education among the people of the City, particularly the Colored group. While our bed capacity is small, and the number of chronic cases admitted to our Service prohibit a rapid turn-over, we try to do two things: First, we try to give the best medical care. Second, we strive to get a slant on the different aspects of community health by a careful analysis and classification of those cases which come into our service, with the hope that our own statistical data will reveal to us in what line we can be of the greatest service to the Community.

A study of the social behavior of our patients bring out two interesting facts: First, that a large percent of the Negro people practice self-medication or self-doctoring. Second, that a large number of Negroes belong to a so-called religious movement that promises to administer to all of their needs, whether they be spiritual, physical or otherwise. The result is that legitimate medical aid is denied or rejected until such service becomes inadequate to cope with their disease problem.

A few suggestions may serve to show how easy it is for a victim of Heart Disease to be misled as to the nature of his malady, namely: That cough, which so many call a cold; the shortness of breath on climbing stairs or running, which is attributed to a stomach too full of something; and the distress in the upper abdomen, which is taken to be indigestion; that painless swelling of the feet and legs, which,

too often, is attributed to too much standing or walking--collectively or separately, may be the first indication that the victim thereof is suffering from some form of Heart Disease. Patented cough medicines, baking soda, patented digestive mixtures, soaking the feet in hot water, and rubbing with vinegar or alcohol will do no good, for the reason that the heart is the seat of the disease and requires the attention of someone who understands its form and function.

If Ministers or churches and Officials of Fraternities would emphasize the few suggestions given above to their membership, it would be of tremendous value in helping the Profession of Medicine save more lives from this serious malady, by being able to render treatment when it can be most effective.

With our Northern cities over-populated with doctors and, in addition, the number of free dispensary clinics within easy reach of the average individual, one can find very little reason, and no excuse, for anyone not to receive proper medical care.

Since Heart Disease usually has an insidious onset, victims of the disease may be quite unaware of its presence until irreparable damage has been done. This being the case, the hope of its early detection rests almost wholly on periodic physical examinations.

The mortality from Tuberculosis in the past twenty-five years has been reduced to a point far in excess of what the greatest optimist felt could be done. This reduction in Tuberculosis mortality may be attributed to one big factor--and that factor is "public consciousness." The people are made aware of the fight against Tuberculosis each year around the Christmas Season by the sale of Special Stamps. It seems to the Writer that Heart Disease deserves a place of importance in the public mind comparable to that of Tuberculosis; and the

Writer believes, to precede or follow our Independence Day Celebration with a campaign directed towards the lowering of the incidence of Heart Disease, would be one of the most intelligent steps the American people could take.

On Independence Day, which is the Fourth of July, the American People celebrate a victory over something, and, to tie this in with a campaign towards the control of Heart Disease among the people, should prove most effective. Since we use Seals for Tuberculosis, Buttons might be useful in a Heart Campaign.

Signed:

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